

**WASHINGTON STATE BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL
SUMMARY MINUTES**

*DATE: June 3, 2010
TIME: 2:00 p.m.*

*PLACE: Natural Resource Building
Olympia, Washington*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Josh Weiss, Chair
Leonard Bauer
Ken Berg
Dave Brittell
Rob Fimbel
John Garner
Pete Heide
Tom Laurie
Ikuno Masterson
Lynda Ransley
Clay Sprague
Kate Stenberg
Paul Wagner

WA State Association of Counties
Department of Commerce
US Fish and Wildlife
Department of Fish & Wildlife
State Parks
Tacoma Nature Center
WA Forest Protection Association
Department of Ecology
ESA Adolfson
Puget Sound Partnership
Department of Natural Resources
At-Large
Department of Transportation

PRESENTERS and GUESTS:

Kaleen Cottingham
John Gamon
Bill Robinson
Elizabeth Rodrick
Lee Corum

Recreation and Conservation Office
Washington Natural Heritage Program/DNR
The Nature Conservancy
Department of Fish and Wildlife
University of Washington

STAFF and CONTRACTORS:

Paul Dziedzic
Sarah Gage
Lori Lawrence
Rachel LeBaron Anderson

ACTIONS TAKEN

Item	Action	Reference
Meeting minutes	Approved	Page 2

SUMMARY OF MEETING ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Council members discussed the events and actions since the March meeting and reflected on the Council's sunset.
- Council members provided input on possible future homes for Council projects and how to further the recommendations in the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.
- Kaleen Cottingham presented Council members with awards of service and letters of thanks from the Governor.

OPENING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Josh Weiss, Chair, opened the meeting at 2:10 p.m. He announced that today's meeting is the last meeting of the Washington Biodiversity Council and invited attendees to introduce themselves.

Paul Dziedzic reviewed the agenda.

COUNCIL BUSINESS ITEMS:

Approval of March meeting minutes

Josh Weiss called for a **MOTION** to approve the March 10, 2010 meeting minutes. Dave Brittel **MOVED** approval of the March 10, 2010 minutes. Pete Heide **SECONDED**. The minutes were **APPROVED** as presented.

Budget Update

Sarah Gage overviewed the budget, noting that funding continues for the next fiscal year. In the current fiscal year, there is one outstanding contract for \$7,750, which is on track for completion. For the next fiscal year approximately \$105,000 will cover staffing (1.5 FTE) and approximately \$50,000 is available for transitioning projects.

TRANSITION OF COUNCIL'S WORK:

Review of events since March meeting

Sarah Gage gave a brief review of work since the March meeting, when the Council was tasked with developing a consensus transition plan addressing the management of all on-going projects and transferring the role and function of the Biodiversity Council into the DNR's Natural Heritage Advisory Council. Key events:

- April 20th Executive Committee Meeting: Outlined four-point framework for discussing a merged council.
- May 4th Meeting of State Agency Members of both Councils: Reviewed core functions from Leadership Strategy; confirmed importance of Council's coordinating role.
- May 4th Governor's action:
 - *"While I strongly support the work of the Biodiversity Council, I am asking the Natural Resources Cabinet to absorb the Council's oversight role."*
 - The appropriation for the Biodiversity Council was left in the budget.
- May 17th Executive Committee Meeting: Outlined a pathway memo to the Natural Resources Cabinet—recommended that RCO and DNR draft legislation to accomplish transition.
- May 24th Kaleen met with Governor's Chief of Staff—discussion led to memo delivered to Natural Resources Cabinet.

Feedback from Governor's Natural Resources Cabinet May 27th Meeting

Kaleen Cottingham reviewed the memo with the Council. The memo included short-term and long-term actions in the six key areas of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and listed four options:

1. Divide up the responsibilities among the various agencies.
2. Merge the responsibilities into an existing entity (such as the Natural Heritage Advisory Council, Invasive Species, or somewhere else).
3. Maintain a biodiversity staffing function at the RCO but without a council.
4. Other ideas/suggestions.

After discussion, the Natural Resources Cabinet chose option #1. Overall, Cabinet members said they were focused on their core agency issues and could not do more in these economically challenging times. Kaleen asked the Council where the long-term work should go.

Council Discussion

- Josh Weiss said that the conversations regarding merging with the Natural Heritage Advisory Council at the Executive Committee meetings and at the meeting of stakeholder agencies had been great discussions. He thanked everyone involved.
- John Garner sees staff as the best remaining resource to the Council.
- Tom Laurie asked if Kaleen had met with the Commissioner of Public Lands. Kaleen said that after the Cabinet decision, the meeting was canceled.
- Tom followed up by asking if it might be good to expand to the Natural Heritage Council anyway.

- Clay said it is still an interesting idea, but he hasn't yet discussed it with the Commissioner.
- Kaleen said that councils including private partners and multiple agencies are not created easily. Coordination doesn't come easily to state agencies even in good times.
- Kate Stenberg asked who was on the Natural Resources Cabinet.
 - Kaleen said the Cabinet is made up of many of the Biodiversity Council members' bosses. A primary issue was that it was not clear where money would come from to continue some version of the Council. There was also discussion on not creating a larger council after the Governor's veto. She was the only one at the table advocating for the Council.
- Leonard Bauer says by choosing option #1, the cabinet agencies took on the work. Did they explain how the work would be done or express enthusiasm for the projects?
 - Kaleen Cottingham said that option #1 was the default decision.
- Paul Dziedzic noted the possibility of continuing public-private collaboration within the projects.
- Leonard expressed concern that projects going to new agency homes are rarely successful; some projects may just disappear.
- Pete Heide had the same concern of projects disappearing within agencies and being terminated. He asked whether this was an easy way for the Cabinet to terminate the projects.
- Kaleen cautioned against reading any intent of terminating the projects into the Cabinet's action. She is concerned about losing the public-private partnership and highlighted that in her comments to the Cabinet. She hopes that the Natural Heritage Advisory Council may keep some of that partnership alive. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is already maintaining the maps and the Washington State Conservation Commission is already charged with working on landowner incentives.
- Ikuno Masterson asked who promotes biodiversity. Biodiversity is not in the mission statements of the natural resource agencies and she wonders where it will continue.
 - Kaleen noted that biodiversity conservation is written into some of the grant requirements of programs housed within RCO.
- Clay Sprague said all the natural resource agencies have some responsibility for biodiversity conservation. It will be continued at the Natural Heritage Program and other programs.
- Dave Brittell said that one of the things that hurt the Biodiversity Council in these discussions were directors saying that they were already kind of doing biodiversity conservation. Need to keep pushing the ball forward even without the Biodiversity Council.
- Elizabeth Rodrick says each agency does have some lead staff working on biodiversity, so maybe could form an interagency committee.
- Paul clarified that the veto language indicated that the Natural Resource Cabinet would "absorb the oversight role." Kaleen did offer Sarah Gage as staff to the Cabinet on biodiversity issues.
- Kate asked to go on the record saying that no one would say Natural Resource Agencies are not working on biodiversity issues, but that the Biodiversity Council was formed to guide efforts and provide focus and coordination. That has not happened. Each agency is still going in its own direction. This is a disappointing decision.
- Josh said that his comments are similar to Kate's—this is a disappointing, unfortunate decision.
 - He doesn't know whether the message that the veto sent was understood by the staff who wrote it, or whether they knew what the Biodiversity Council meant and what handing it to the Natural Resource Cabinet would mean.
 - He does not feel optimistic that the Cabinet will pick up the coordinating function. Where the projects land is important, but he doesn't feel confident that the work will be carried through to its full potential.
 - He has really appreciated Kaleen's work as the Biodiversity Council's advocate and feels she has done the best anyone could have done.
 - He is frustrated that none of the Council's recommendations have been moved forward.
- Pete said the decision shows where the state's capacity is now in these economic times.
- Ikuno asked about the Natural Resource Reform initiative.
 - Kaleen talked about some of the changes being considered—lining up agencies' regional boundaries so that they are the same; shared land management.
 - Clay confirmed committees are discussing common boundaries and "one front door" for all of the agencies. WDFW, DNR, and Parks are looking at combined land management.

- Dave Brittell noted that the efforts are modest compared to the sweeping changes that were originally discussed.
- Josh said that he observed bipartisan interest when he sat in on a legislative committee discussion on land and water management; they were looking at it differently from last session.
- Bill Robinson added some of his observations, noting there have been follow-up meetings. Legislators want to ensure that in combining any functions they do not diminish environmental protections; there was disappointment in the Governor's natural resource reform.

COUNCIL PROJECT UPDATES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT FISCAL YEAR:

Sarah Gage provided an overview of the four active Council projects and their status.

Biodiversity Scorecard

Sarah shared a draft of the fact sheet about the Biodiversity Scorecard. It is on track for completion this month, along with a companion ten-page summary of the technical report. She has been working with a subgroup of the science committee on a possible memorandum of understanding among DNR, WDFW, and Parks to authorize limited staff time to continue working on the scorecard. As a first step they would choose a subset of the thirty indicators in the technical report.

John Gamon commented that there are data available to create the first edition of the scorecard to deliver to the public. John Marzluff and Steve Walters are advising and reviewing documents.

Conservation Toolbox for Land Use Planners

Council staff has been working to build the content of the spreadsheet and refine its text and organization. They are actively pursuing opportunities to introduce the tool to planning community, for example by preparing the content to post on our Web site and a presentation at the October meeting of the American Planning Association–Washington Chapter.

Conservation Opportunity Framework maps

The Conservation Opportunity Framework maps are being used; Council staff have been referring about one request a month to WDFW. They are seeking opportunities to provide access to data underlying the maps to broader array of users; WDFW and DNR/WNHP are working on data viewer.

Biodiversity Web site

The top five pages viewed in 2009 were Ecoregions (general information), Columbia Plateau ecoregion, Incentives Forum, Biodiversity Council, and Education. Council staff plans to refresh the site's content to provide access to Council tools and reflect the Council's sunset.

Council Discussion

General

- Paul Dziedzic noted that the projects are nearly ready for public launch, so the good news is that RCO will foster them until others commit to carry them forward. He asked the Council to give guidance on criteria for homes for the projects.
- Kaleen said that the Council's money can be an incentive for those taking on the projects.
- Josh said that while it may not be realistic, he wants non-state agency Council partners to consider in picking up the work and the projects. Not all work needs to be housed in a state agency.
- Dave Brittell asked if the directors of agencies in the Natural Resources Cabinet had dialogued about taking the projects.
 - Kaleen responded that they had not.
- Pete said that we should look outside state agencies, e.g., USDA and conservation incentives.
- Tom asked "will the projects be loved" in their new homes? He suggested that down the road an ad hoc advisory group could look at next steps for the biodiversity projects.
 - Kaleen said the Governor's chief of staff was nervous about calling together any committee or council, etc. She suggested that people can get together and discuss as long as they are not an official group.

- Leonard said that it would be useful to give projects to homes that would be excited about them. He suggested fleshing out the working group recommendations to show where the project is going, what we had in mind for next steps and long-term goals, and show organizations how it fits the missions and visions of the receiving organization. Even though the Council is gone, members can sell the ideas over the next year.
- Paul Dziedzic said Kaleen and Sarah might call on individuals as ambassadors in moving the projects forward.
- Leonard agreed that people's job descriptions would allow them to do ambassador work.
- Ikuno commented that as someone outside of government, she would go to Ecology to look at indicators of pollution, water quality, etc. She does not think of DNR or DFW for this sort of work. The word "eco" is in most of the Council's strategy so it seems those things should go to "ecology".
 - Tom Laurie replied that Ecology has a great name and that the name is bigger than what they actually are. They do have a lot of monitoring, but the Natural Heritage Program would be more likely to use biodiversity information in direct application. Tom told Kaleen he is happy to work with her if they are a likely place for a project to be housed.
- John Gamon suggested that for all the projects, it seems like there are individuals from the working groups to keep the conversation going. That model has worked well for the scorecard.
- Paul Dziedzic said he heard consensus around the idea of "work groups of the willing."
- Clay said DNR is happy to continue working on this. Agencies that have biodiversity in their work programs can help provide oversight and a continuing forum.

Biodiversity Scorecard

- Kaleen asked for more feedback on where the scorecard might land, and information about possible MOUs. The GMAP office is not likely to be a taker.
- John Gamon said that DFW and DNR have the most easily accessible data, but that John Marzluff and Steven Walters pulled from other datasets too.
- Kaleen asked how those two agencies would feel about taking it.
 - Dave Brittell says there is a strong connection with his agency and biodiversity science. They are undergoing a reorganization and emphasizing conservation. They are open to dialogue.
 - Clay agreed.
- Ikuno asked what performance measures are already in place relating to biodiversity?
 - Kaleen said that natural resources performance measures are focused mostly on Puget Sound right now. They had the first look at a draft last week.
- John Garner said the scorecard is one area where we may be better served by giving the work to an NGO with funding. John feels agencies are good at ferreting out data, but an NGO might do a better job of consolidating data and telling compelling stories even if they are not pretty. Agencies do not like to give the bad news. Landowners are more likely to share data with NGOs. He has concerns about this being a governmental report.
 - Kaleen found this suggestion intriguing; she noted that there's a freeze on contracting, but that it might be possible to issue funding as a grant.
 - Josh noted that a strength of the Council was its public-private partnership, and the irony that when state sponsorship is pulled we consider the partnership over. However, he thought it unlikely that his organization would be willing to put in future resources.
 - Elizabeth Rodrick said she understood John's concern but that state agencies are the stewards of state resources; they need to be reporting on the status so they can improve it and be responsible stewards.
- Pete asked if the scorecard is ready to leave the academic world and enter the practical world.
 - Sarah replied that it was originally conceived as a two-year project that received only one year of funding. The number of indicators needs to be winnowed down. We have the chassis of a Cadillac but we need a functional go-kart.
 - John Gamon said that the scorecard is not ready to give an overall report of how we are doing, but we may be able to extract nuggets of information as examples of how the report card works, or issue indicators at intervals.

- Pete said that some of the work for the next year could be continuing to search for an academic continuation of the work. It does not do us much good to hand it off before it is ready.

Conservation Opportunity Framework maps

- Ikuno asked about the status of the maps.
 - Elizabeth Rodrick replied that the maps are based on the Ecoregional Assessments. DFW has maintained that database so it is reasonable to assume that they will continue to do so. They are trying to develop a data viewer to make the underlying data visible.

Web site

- John Garner suggested that the Web site can be a centralized location to identify what is and is not being done with the Strategy recommendations; use the projects to enact action items.
- Kaleen suggested that the Web site might go to the Natural Heritage Advisory Council or the Nature Conservancy. Clay expressed agreement.
- Pete spoke to the importance of keeping the Web site as a hub of information—updating it regularly, keeping it fresh would help keep the biodiversity effort alive until the economy improves.
- Sarah said that staff will keep the Web site content fresh. There has been some discussion about whether it would merge with the Natural Heritage Program site or with Landscape America.
- John Gamon clarified that Land Scope America has been dormant recently but has lots of similar themes. It has a map viewer. There is a possible opportunity there.
- Kaleen said that RCO can carry the Web site for this fiscal year. They can continue to host it after that, but they would not be able to keep it actively updated after June 2011 due to lack of staff.

SLIDE SHOW: COUNCIL MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Sarah showed slides highlighting the council's work.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS OF SERVICE

Kaleen Cottingham, director of the Recreation and Conservation Office, presented a certificate and a letter from the Governor to each Council member in recognition of their service. Josh also said we have been lucky to work with great staff and presented a plaque to Sarah Gage from the Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lee Corum, a University of Washington graduate student, introduced himself. He is doing a joint degree in Public Affairs and Forest Resources and focusing his Master's thesis on the Washington Biodiversity Council. The focus of his study is to show what the Council made possible that was not possible before. He hopes to interview each Council member and look for common. Josh commented that it is great that someone is looking at the Council and looks forward to seeing the paper.

ADJOURN:

Josh commented that has enjoyed his work on the Council. He closed the meeting by thanking everyone once again for their work.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Josh Weiss, Chair